Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-02

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 MC-02

AID-05 IGA-01 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /080 W

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R 260626Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2590
INFO SECDEF WASHDC//ISA(SA)/DSAA//
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USCINCEUR//ECJ4/7-SAME//
DA WASHDC//DALO-ILS//
CMC WASHDC//PL/L//

CONFIDENTIAL KUWAIT 1329

E.O. 11652: GDS TAGS: MASS, KU

CNO WASHDC//OP63//

SUBJ: TANKS AND KUWAIT

- 1. AS HAS BEEN REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, KUWAITI-UK NEGOTIATIONS FOR PROCUREMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 120 CHIEFTAIN TANKS ARE DEADLOCKED. AS WEEKS GO BY, BOTH OUR BRITISH AND RELIABLE KUWAITI SOURCES INDICATE IMPASSE IS PROBABLY INSURMOUNTABLE. WE KNOW GOK IS LOOKING INTO POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING THE FRG LEOPARD, BUILT UNDER LICENSE BY AN ITALIAN FIRM. GOK ALSO IS MAKING DISCREET INQUIRIES WITH CHRYSLER RE US EQUIPMENT. IN ADDITION, RECURRING RUMORS EXIST OF POSSIBLE INTEREST IN USSR-SUPPLIED TANKS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT.
- 2. I BELIEVE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST FOR BRITISH TO MAINTAIN THEIR 115 SECONDED NCO'S AND OFFICERS AND 20 HMG CIVILIAN MILITARY ADVISORS IN KUWAIT. SHOULD THEY LEAVE, THE VACCUUM MUST BE FILLED. THE LOCAL HEAD OF THE BRITISH LIAISON TEAM BELIEVES HIS GROUP'S CONTINUED PRESENCE AT CURRENT LEVELS IS DEPENDENT ON THE UK CONTINUING AS PRIMARY SOURCE OF ARMORED CONFIDENTIAL

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EQUIPMENT. IF KUWAIT TURNS ELSEWHERE FOR THIS EQUIPMENT, HE BELIEVES THE UK CAN BE EXPECTED OVER TIME TO PHASEDOWN ITS

PRESENCE.

- 3. WHILE OUR INTERESTS UNDOUBTEDLY ARE BEST SERVED BY FOSTERING THE CONTINUES PRESENCE IN KUWAIT OF UK MILITARY, I BELIEVE IT PRUDENT TO BE PREPARED TO STEP IN QUICKLY WITH AN ATTRACTIVE OFFER IF GOK AND HMG CANNOT REACH AN AGREEMENT. GOK ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH OFFER WOULD NOT NECESSARILY RESULT IN REDUCED UK PRESENCE, AND CERTAINLY WOULD IN ANY CASE BE PREFERABLE TO ALLOWING NON-US OR UK PARTY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION.
- 4. I HAVE BEEN INFORMED US ARMED FORCES HAVE RECENTLY REMOVED SOME M103-120MM GUN TANKS FROM SERVICE AND THAT THEY ARE NOW EXCESS TO US REQUIREMENTS. ALSO, I UNDERSTAND THERE IS A PROGRAM TO REBUILD EARLY MODEL M48 TANKS TO AN M48A5 CONFIGURATION.
- 5. FROM INFORMATION LOCALLY AVAILABLE, THE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES APPEARS TO BE:
- A. 120-.60 TANKS WITH FIVE YEARS SPARE PARTS, AMMUNITION, TRAINING, ETC. DELIVERY SCHEDULE OF FOUR YEARS OR LONGER WOULD PROBABLY PRECLUDE SUCH OFFER FROM SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.
- B. 120-M48A5 TANKS WITH SPARES, ETC. DELIVERY SCHEUDULE WHICH COULD PROVIDE ABOUT 25 IN LESS THAN ONE YEAR COULD MAKE SUCH OFFER HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE.
- C. 120-M103 TANKS WITH SPARES, ETC. A PACKAGE WHICH WOULD PROVIDE 25-50 IN A FEW MONTHS IN SERVICEABLE CONDITION FOR TRAINING, ETC, WHILE 100 WERE REBUILT/REMANUFACTURED/UPGRADED COULD ALSO BE QUITE ATTRACTIVE TO GOK. I UNDERSTAND MAJOR COMPLAINT US FORCES HAVE HAD AGAINST THIS TANK IS THAT SIZE AND WEIGHT TOO GREAT FOR BRIDGES IN EUROPE AND ASIA. THERE ARE NO BRIDGES IN KUWAIT.
- 6. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON FOREGOING. IF DEPARTMENT FAVORABLE TO US OFFER TANKS TO GOK AFTER RPT AFTER CLEAR BREAKDOWN OF UK-GOK CHIEFTAIN TALKS, REQUEST INFORMATION ON ALTERNATE OFFERS WE COULD MAKE TO GOK. WE WOULD LIKE TO CONFIDENTIAL CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVE THIS INFORMATION (WHICH CAN BE PRELIMINARY AND GENERAL IN NATURE TO START WITH) SOONEST---ON UNDERSTANDING WE WILL NOT RPT NOT DISCUSS US TANK OFFER WITH KUWAITIS UNTIL AND UNLESS BRITISH ABANDON EFFORT SELL THEIR CHIEFTAIN TANKS. STOLTZFUS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994 Channel Indicators: n/a

Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Concepts: PROCUREMENT, MILITARY EQUIPMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, TANKS (COMBAT VEHICLES)

Control Number: n/a Copy: SINGLE Draft Date: 26 MAR 1975 Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960 Decaption Note: Disposition Action: RELEASED

Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KUWAIT01329

Document Number: 1975KUWAIT01329
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00

Drafter: n/a Enclosure: n/a Executive Order: GS Errors: N/A

Film Number: D750106-0872

From: KUWAIT

Handling Restrictions: n/a

Image Path:

Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750314/aaaaamno.tel Line Count: 110 Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM Office: ACTION PM Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL Original Handling Restrictions: n/a Original Previous Classification: n/a Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a

Page Count: 3

Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a Reference: n/a

Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED Review Authority: KelleyW0

Review Comment: n/a Review Content Flags: Review Date: 01 JUL 2003

Review Event:

Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <10 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>

Review Markings:

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Review Media Identifier: Review Referrals: n/a Review Release Date: n/a Review Release Event: n/a **Review Transfer Date:** Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a

Secure: OPEN Status: NATIVE

Subject: TANKS AND KUWAIT TAGS: MASS, KU To: STATE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006